

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES - Guidelines for Module Assessment Boards

First Sitting

Extenuating Circumstances are circumstances relating to a student's health and /or personal life which are of a sufficiently serious nature to result in her or his being unable to attend, complete, or submit an assessment on time. The Regulations relating to Extenuating Circumstances and the Criteria by which they will be judged are reproduced in the current Examination and Assessment Regulations.

The University of Portsmouth operates a "fit to sit" policy. If a student attends an examination or hands a piece of coursework in on time, they are claiming that they were fit to do so and can not submit an extenuating circumstances form – all claims where they have attended or submitted the assessment on time will be rejected.

Problems with course management that have affected student performance, either individually as part of a group, should be remedied as a result of students following the student complaints procedure. The Department may also anticipate the effect of such problem and through the Head of Department, acting in consultation with the Academic Registrar, regard these as generic extenuating circumstances, which may require some proposed remedy. These processes may result in the Module Assessment Board(MAB) being asked to endorse or consider proposed remedies.

MABs will be informed by Extenuating Circumstances Officers whether a student has valid extenuating circumstances, and if so, which assessment artefacts have not been completed, attended or submitted on time. MABs will not be informed of what the extenuating circumstances are, nor should they spend time discussing them.

The MAB may make one of four possible decisions with regard to valid extenuating circumstances:

Firstly, where the student has missed an examination, the MAB will record a decision of Deferral and offer the student the opportunity to complete a Deferral in the affected assessment artefact(s). The Deferral will be taken during the Referral period. The Chair of the MAB shall ensure communication takes place with the student giving details of the Deferral and its timing.

Secondly, where a student has had an assessment penalty imposed in relation to an assessment artefact by virtue of late submission and also has a valid extenuating circumstance in relation to that assessment artefact, then the penalty will be cancelled and the assessment artefact given the full mark it justifies on its merits alone provided the work was submitted within ten working days of the due date of submission. Students can not submit a further extenuating circumstances claim within this period to extend the time further. Should a student be unable to submit the work within the ten working days of the due date of submission, the MAB will record a decision of Deferral and offer the student the opportunity to complete a Deferral in the affected assessment artefact(s). The Chair of the MAB shall ensure communication takes place with the student giving details of the Deferral and its timing.

The MAB, exceptionally, may lift penalties for late submission in the absence of any student claim or Extenuating Circumstances Officer decision. If it does this, the Chair of the MAB must cause the minutes of the meeting to record clearly the grounds for exercising such discretion. The MAB cannot waive, under any circumstance, an assessment penalty where the Extenuating Circumstances Officer has determined that a student's claim is invalid.

Where the coursework has not been received because the student is still within the time period for submitting it late and attracting the full marks, the Module Assessment Board shall record a decision of PENDING and will delegate the decision to Chairs Action following the MAB. The MAB cannot waive penalties imposed in accordance with the University Disciplinary Procedures.

Thirdly, the MAB may extrapolate an overall mark in cases where, in its academic judgement, there is sufficient evidence, from at least two other completed and unaffected assessment artefacts contributing to the final mark of the module, that the learning outcomes of the module have been met. An example would be where there are a number of small assessments progressively building on a competence and achievement of the final tested competence demonstrates competence in the earlier assessments. In such a case, the MAB might judge that the student had successfully demonstrated the learning outcomes of the module and would extrapolate a mark by discounting the affected assessment and re-calculating an overall mark by re-weighting the unaffected assessment artefacts accordingly.

Finally, where the student is not eligible for Referral and it is not possible for the student to pass the module by undertaking the affected assessment(s) and achieving maximum marks the MAB can make its decision as if there were no extenuating circumstances. If there is any chance (no matter how small) of the student passing the module by undertaking the affected assessment(s), it will record a decision of Deferral and offer the student the opportunity to complete a deferred assessment in the affected examination artefact(s).

Chairs should make sure members of the MAB understand that, under the University's extenuating circumstance policy, a student with a valid extenuating circumstance, who can achieve a pass by undertaking the affected examinations, has a right to another attempt at the affected examination provided that they can pass the module within the Referral Period.

All decisions taken by a Module Assessment Board in respect of valid extenuating circumstances made known to it must be recorded in the minutes, together with a reason for the decision reached.

Referral and/or Deferral

Where a student submits an extenuating circumstance for Referrals and/or Deferral, the MAB shall make a decision of Deferred Repeat.

Deferred Repeat confirms that the student has submitted valid extenuating circumstances for their Referral and/or Deferral (or any subsequent attempts within the same academic year.) The student will be normally eligible to repeat the module at the next available assessment. The Board of Examiners will determine:

- (i) whether it is with or without attendance
- (ii) whether the student has to repeat the whole module or just one of more failed artefacts.

All decisions taken by a BOE in respect of valid extenuating circumstances made known to it must be recorded in the minutes, together with a reason for the decision reached.

George Allison, Assistant Registrar, Assessments & Student Regulations
September 2019

Links to Useful Documents

[Extenuating Circumstances – Guidance for Module Assessment Boards](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances – Criteria](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances – Guidance for Students](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances – Guidance for Boards of Examiners](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances – Guidance for Extenuating Circumstances Officers](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances – Procedures](#)

[Withdrawal and Suspension of Studies](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances](#)

[Coursework](#)

[Examinations](#)

[Module Assessment Boards](#)